THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE:

A CONFERENCE

PROGRAMME & READER

PROGRAMME

SATURDAY

Introduction. Safer spaces policy:
Workers memorial day April 28th. Ask for a minutes silence.
Acknowledgment to country

Working--the personal story: 11.30—12.30am upstairs.
Come and share your personal story of organizing at work, or of shared and injustices, and possible methods to fight.

Rank and File Organising-- Working for change within the official union structure: 12.45-2pm
The experiences of a worker engaged in industrial organising in the NSW public service. Organising work that is being carried out as part of a reform group of rank and file union members and delegates fighting against management and union bureaucracy for democratic control of union affairs by the membership. A discussion about the potential for anarchists & Marxists to become more involved in working inside the union movement for radical social change and workers control.

Lunch: 2pm-2.45pm

Direct Action and its fallout: 2.45pm-4pm
In this workshop there will be a presentation on 3 case study disputes where workers have employed different types of self-directed resistance over the last 15 years and the fallout from each approach from a participant/stakeholder/organiser perspective.

Ecologically Aware Syndicalism: 4.15-5.30pm

Film-- The Strike: 6.30pm

SUNDAY

Worker self-organisation and the struggle against job cuts at the University of Sydney: 11.30am-12.45 pm

A full report on the current struggle between academia and the corporate entity of Sydney University.

The women's union and autonomous struggles: 1-2pm

Lunch: 2-2.45pm

Direct unionism and further planning: 3pm-4.30pm

READER CONTENTS

1. My body, my rules: a case for rape and domestic violence survivors becoming workplace organizers- Liberte Locke
2. Reflections on the end of Union Solidarity and the Community Union Weekends- Tristan Epstein & Liz Turner, with Lulu Garcia
3. Grassroots Organising and the Public Sector unions- Lindsay Hawkins
4. Counter Planning from the Kitchen- Nicole Cox and Silvia Federici
5. Direct Unionism
6. Methods of Struggle

NB: The reader was put together by someone not very involved in the organising of the conference, with little consultation with conference organisers and those putting on workshops. It is only a snapshot of readings and ideas about 'the worker's struggle'.

MY BODY, MY RULES: A CASE FOR RAPE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS BECOMING WORKPLACE ORGANISERS

Liberté Locke, a Starbucks Workers Union organizer, writes about how violence at work and in our personal lives are similar, how domestic abusers and bosses use the same techniques of control and that we need to fight both. From libcom.org, originally posted on December 4, 2011 on Facebook.

TRIGGER WARNING: sexual violence

I was raped by a boyfriend on August 18th, 2006. The very next day I held back tears while I lied to a stranger over the phone about why I was unavailable to go in that day for a second interview for a job that I desperately needed. When I hung up the phone I saw a new text message. It was from him. "It's not over. It will never be over between us..."

The next day I went in for the second interview. It was inside of the Sears Tower Starbucks in Chicago. I took the train to the interview constantly looking around me and shaking. I needed work. I had just been fired from Target two weeks prior and had no prospects. I knew I would have to go through a metal detector in order to enter the building so despite every instinct in my body I did not bring a knife with me.

"What would you do if you caught a coworker stealing?"
My mind is racing. I'm thinking that I risked my safety by leaving my house for a stupid job that pays $7.75/hr. Aren't I worth more than that? Aren't we all worth so much more? "I'd tell management right away, of course. I've never understood why someone would steal from work..." I tell them what they want me to.

I started working at Starbucks on August 22, 2006. That was a little over five years ago. Every year we have annual reviews where I generally get to argue with someone younger than me who makes significantly more than do about why my hard work, aching back, cracking hands, sore wrists, the bags under my eyes, the burns, the bruises on my arms, the cuts on my knees, the constant degrading treatment by the customers, the "baby, honey, sugar, bitch", the "hey, you, slut...I said NO whip cream!"s, the staring, the following after work...I get to argue why all that means I'm worth a 33cent raise rather than 22cents, Degrading for any worker. Degrading especially for a woman worker. Only for me, I get to do this every year just four days after the anniversary of when someone I was in love with raped me. My annual review is truly the only reason I'm reminded of the anniversary of the assault.

I wish I was exaggerating but truthfully I've just toned down how I really feel about it. Since we're talking about labor, I could also mention how when I was raped I didn't

leave the house where it happened until the morning because of two main reasons 1) I feared riding the subway home at 3am and 2) I was getting picked up in the morning by my then best friend (and my boyfriend's other partner) to head to her wealthy parents' house in the suburbs where they were paying me to clean. Desperately needing to sell my labor in exchange for simple cash kept me laying awake next to my attacker. Not wanting to lose the gig had me lying to him. Promising that I'd never tell anyone. Promising not to leave him. Promises that at the time I wasn't sure that I wouldn't keep.

It was when I was on my hands and knees literally scrubbing the floor of her parents' house that it occurred to me that being poor was truly enough of an assault. I stood up. I told her everything. I didn't hear any supportive words. She said she was jealous. I wanted to throw up. I told her to take me home and that I'd rather starve than clean her parents' house that day.

She gave me the cash even though I was nowhere near done and drove me home. Both from her guilty conscience, I'm sure. I resent her less these days realizing that his manipulative behavior had gotten to her too. But it was worse for her than me. I was getting out. She was deciding to stay and betray another woman in the process. That's some pretty heavy manipulation.

In the months after the assault I went to therapy for free through a domestic violence program. I went through exercises that forced me to relive some of my happy memories of him and I together. I didn't want to. We dated on and off for a couple of years and had definitely had some wonderful times. I wished they'd never happened. I wished I'd never met him. I didn't want to remember his face, his voice, his scent. I purged my life of everything he gave me and everything that reminded me of him. My therapist wanted to get to the root cause of where the assault came from because I blamed myself so entirely. Thinking things were great before that one night that hit me out of no where. Or so I thought.

After nearly six months of therapy we hit a revelation. He was always manipulative, always verbally abusive. He preyed on my self-esteem and wanted me miserable so that I felt I needed him. So I'd crave his approval and attention. The few days leading up the assault I had started standing up for myself, not taking his shit as much. Refusing sex when I thought he was being an asshole when in the past I would had caved even after he would insult me. My therapist presented the idea that he raped me because he felt he was losing his control over me. It was meant to break me...as you would a horse. Through therapy I started to feel like I was worth something and that he was the sad loser. Not me. He wanted something from me and getting that something wasn't enough. He wanted my spirit and body. Ownership over things uncontainable. When I started to feel stronger and less afraid I really stopped being able to put up with rude customers. Not putting up with rude customers meant facing the bosses'

wrath when the customers complained which then meant I had to stand up to my bosses. Finally the real opportunity came and not wanting to live as a victim anymore took the form of signing a union card with the Industrial Workers of the World. I learned about organized labor. I decided that if I'm not meant to be some man's slave than why be a slave to a boss, to a corporation, to a customer?

I looked at bosses as they sat in desks, sipping coffee drinks that they had me make them, pouring over sales numbers they got because of the hard work of me and my coworkers. We worked ourselves to complete exhaustion. Mothers I worked with talked about missing their kid's first step while making lattes. I've known many pregnant women who have worked while dilated, risking their unborn child's well being and their own, because maternity leave is so short and they wanted as much time as possible with their newborns so they were holding out. I knew the bosses and the company were responsible for the state of things.

The bosses were very manipulative. Abusing you for many shifts in a row, refusing you breaks, calling you stupid, promoting people that sexually harassed you, giving you schedules that made sleep impossible, refusing raises based on petty things like whether you always remembered to wear the required black socks or cover your tattoos. Then when we started organizing they would do this behavior for days and suddenly throw a pizza party. The majority of workers would thank the boss and talk for weeks about how much they really cared about us. How kind they were. How lucky we were.

Suddenly all the abuse faded away and grudges were dropped. Bosses were welcomed back into group conversations and invited to baby showers. I see no difference between this scenario and the boyfriend hitting his girlfriend in the face and then showing up with flowers & candy and the cycle starting all over again. I am not ashamed of being raped or manipulated by my ex. I am also not ashamed of leaving him and trying to heal. I am not ashamed of what horrible abuses I've experienced and witnessed since beginning to work at Starbucks. I refuse to accept them back after a simple pizza party. I don't want pizza. And I don't want flowers. I want freedom from a life of servitude. I want an end to the abuse.

Yes, I could quit and liken it to breaking up with an abusive boyfriend but the next job would recreate the cycle. The next job would be the next abusive partner. So I stay. And I fight. I fight through organizing with other survivors of the abuse, my coworkers. Well, at least the ones that have reached rock bottom and now want to climb out. No, not everyone is ready when I meet them to break up with their oppressor. I'll be here when they are. When they, too, find the courage.
We work together to improve working conditions. Refusing to give them what they want when they are being assholes. Refusing them our labor. The use of our bodies for their own desires.

Under this current system we must make money to survive. To make money we must sell our labor. This is already unjust and disgusting to me. I'm fascinated by the creativity, the skill, and genius of the human mind and body. I feel great pride in being able to make something, teach something, to speak, to write, to learn. How wonderful it is to know humans are capable of so much greatness. The fact that someone was smart enough to exploit this greatness out of others for their own means with as little return to the person who created it as possible is so very heartbreaking. It's the same heartbreak I feel when I learn of a person staying with an abuser and doing everything they say only to be beaten down again. I always wonder when they will leave. I wonder when they will fight back. I feel this way when I hold a coworker who is sobbing from being yelled at by a boss. I wonder when they will stop taking it. Many workers have. Workers who have started and joined unions. We are survivors.

These past five years have been amazing. I've healed from the abuse and degradation of that relationship. I healed through applying my therapist's teachings to my life at work. I refuse to be a victim any more. I'm determined to remember my worth and to try to help others heal from years of abuse at the hands of employers and customers. It isn't enough to walk away if you still haven't realized your worth because low self-esteem for our labor can just put us continually in the same fucked up situations. Before we know it we've been broken down quite literally and have nothing to show for it. The big bosses will have the property they purchased with the money they kept from us. They will have the best doctors, their kids will receive the best education, their parents will be provided for, and they will enjoy the fruits of our labor while we starve. It is no different than the significant other that swipes your paycheck.

The burns from the extra hot milk don't hurt any less when I realize that drink cost my hourly wage but in one hour I will have made over a hundred of them. Don't listen when a boss or an abused coworker tries to make you believe that your labor is worth is nothing. Don't believe them when they belittle your job because it's in fast food, or retail. Whether you sit at a desk, deliver a pizza, clean a toilet, sew a pair of pants, or act on stage in order to pay your bills...remember if the bosses could do it by themselves they would. Remember they need you way more than you need them. Yes, the abuse can get worse when you stand up and fight back. Much like what happened to me. But if it took being raped to get away from such a horribly destructive relationship than that is simply what it took. If it took recovering from that to teach me about liberation and refuse servitude then so be it.

I will not be a slave. I will not be a servant. I do not consent to the abuse of my mind & body or the belittlement of my spirit. When they try to divide us it is like the partner that says you can't see your friends. It is to isolate you so you feel alone, helpless, like your screaming and no one can hear you. Don't let them do that. Refuse isolation. Reach out to your coworkers. Refuse to do unsafe work. Demand the money you deserve. Those that do the most work should live in the most luxury. We earned it. It is

ours.

If you've found a way out of an abusive relationship or situation in your life than you know how badly you needed out. You've gone over in your mind a thousand times just how bad it could have gotten. You feel grateful to have walked away with your life. Imagine if all the horrible treatment at work ended. Imagine you didn't dread clocking in. What if the boss now feared you? What if they wouldn't dare hit you again, call you a name, harass you? What if they gave you all your breaks on time and didn't refuse your overtime pay? What if you set your schedule and decided the tasks you'd take on? What if you set your pay rate? What would it be like to finally be free?

REFLECTIONS ON THE END OF UNION SOLIDARITY AND THE COMMUNITY UNION WEEKENDS

From Mutiny #39 June 2009. By Tristan Epstein & Liz Turner, with Lulu Garcia

Over the past few months a small group of young activists involved in Union Solidarity organised a series of weekend sessions to reflect on campaigns, educate ourselves about climate change and the economic crisis and experiment with new forms of engagement that would enable us to win industrial and community disputes. The weekends were a deliberate response to the current condition of the left in Melbourne.

Historically informed perspectives on social movements suggest that significant social change can only occur when backed by an effective counterpower. We know that counterpower needs to be based on a group numbering in the thousands with coherent (though not necessarily uniform) ideas, a focused programme, an ability to identify political opportunities, and some degree of autonomy in its social reproduction.

In recent years the kind of social and union activism that we commonly engage with around the left has been characterised by an abandonment of our commitment to counterpower. Instead, in the absence of a large, effective power base, the left has tried to use shortcuts to achieve political results. To give examples: Education campaigns sometimes targeted at the general population and sometimes aimed at co-opting decision makers. These campaigns pretend that political change is a battle of ideas outside the political economy. The Climate Emergency campaign, using this tactic, has so far only achieved an intensification of a state-centric approach even while the state has explicitly rejected even the minimal demands of the climate movement.

Direct actions such as coal plant occupations had some initial success but have been declining in utility (less stoppage, less media) and increasing in cost (more arrests, stress, repressive legislation, sparking conflict with workers). Organisers claim that media attention will educate the public, who will in turn intervene in the formal political system. We quietly ignore the fact that with proper planning and an effective counterpower, direct action against the coal industry could ultimately resemble popular insurrection.

Sometimes the left has given up the project of social transformation all together and has turned revolutionary politics into self-help. An example is the "community centres" in Melbourne, Loophole and Barricade Books, which have taken to organising

board games and punk rock nights that limit the so called participating "community" to those already on the inside, and then impose on this community apolitical diversions. Outside this subcultural bubble, protest has become the ritual repetition of formula entirely without an analysis of effectiveness. In both cases the goal of self expression is substituted for the goal of achieving social change.

Union Solidarity was a recent and more successful attempt to create real counterpower. From 2004 Union Solidarity operated as a Victorian-based network of activists which provided support for workers in dozens of industrial disputes. Union Solidarity was a vehicle by which unions were able to get around WorkChoices laws which effectively removed the right to strike and imposed huge fines for union organisers and workers who took industrial action without the approval of the Industrial Relations Commission. The basic concept of Union Solidarity included a coordinated but decentralised communications network used to mobilise people for solidarity when needed. This "whole of class" approach meant that people came together with a willingness to put themselves on the line and stand up for workers and community members in need, without necessarily agreeing on a particular ideology.

During the time it was active, Union Solidarity was more likely than any other group or network to facilitate wins for workers and members of the community. Moderate industrial victories were scored against Boeing, Amcor, Toyota, Preston Motors, Coles Distribution Center, VISY, Australia Post and other corporate evildoers. Union Solidarity helped broker successful outcomes for community campaigns such as saving the Sunshine Pool, Camp Sovereignty and the Student Housing Action Cooperative (SHAC).

In March this year [2009] Union Solidarity ceased to function. It's not rocket science to figure out that the existence of a powerful alternative to the ALP-backed unions became a threat to the state (albeit a minor threat). The Union Solidarity website reads, "The decision to fold was prompted by a lack of resources and a need to rethink the group's core strategy. However Union Solidarity activists believe that given (our) success, the basic concept needs to be spread throughout the whole of the union movement." With little support from the union hierarchy, this can only happen through the strength and confidence of rank and file workers, shop stewards and organisers. One important function of the Community Union Weekends was reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the Union Solidarity Model. There is an assumption that this model could possibly provide a basis for rebuilding a very powerful left.

The Weekends

We organised three weekends in which participants from diverse backgrounds could come together, identify collectively and begin a process of critical reflection, with a view to working out what we need to do in order to rebuild our social and union

movements to something much more powerful than they are today. The best work of the organisers was to create a space in which it was possible for people from different tendencies to offend and confront one another in a constructive and comradely fashion. On the first weekend at Camp Eureka- about 80km from Melbourne- this space was created and there was a profound experience of collective transformation.

Marie Goonan, an elder of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), opened the weekend by explaining that that Camp Eureka has been a site for political education and organising since the 1940s. More than this, the camp was a place not only for planning actions but for a political community that took care of food, education, health, housing and the making of culture. On each day, two hours were devoted to labour for camp maintenance. Car pooling, the formation of working groups for cooking and cleaning, the distribution of cabins through lucky dip and group exercise sessions in the mornings reinforced the idea of collectivity. Another key dynamic was the presence of elders who were able to critically reflect on past campaigns. Guided by fifty years of activist wisdom, reflecting on the past was not vague or superficial but incredibly powerful. Discussing campaigns like the BLF Green Bans and the MUA dispute set a standard for our own efforts. Intensively structured small group work was emphasised over "talking head" sessions. Talking heads were limited to about ten minutes and were asked to engage in critical reflection. We prepared a reader and DVD with background information and activist texts and encouraged people to read and research as part of their engagement with activism.

The latter weekends at the MUA and Trades Hall did not facilitate the creation of any new, meaningful, collective processes and did not subvert any problematic activist norms. We think this was a consequence of the inner-city locations enabling people to come according to other commitments. New people came. We did not identify collectively, and the entire process was much more about content than it was about experimenting with form.

In the final session on Saturday 2nd May, we invited some independent union activists Liz Thompson, Anthony Main, Diana Beaumont, and Simon Millar to address the question of how we get our unions to consider the concerns of the most exploited workers - international students, young workers and others who often miss out on a piece of the sweet, union-baked pie, by virtue of their casual and precarious employment status, cultural background and/or gender. This session invariably degenerated into the same old debate about whether it's more useful to work inside or outside the mainstream union movement. While the speakers were amazing, we were unable to give the session the same love we had given to earlier ones. We were unable to facilitate collective processes that empowered participants to act. Talking heads and speech-making dominated proceedings and many engaged in combative defence or advocacy of their own positions rather than leaving open the possibility of transformation.

For those of us who have recently emerged from or who still have specific political "homes" (be it Socialist Alternative, Solidarity, the Anarcho Syndicalist Federation, etc), it can be very confronting to admit that we are small, that sectarianism holds us back, and that we don't have the answers. In these times when we need to find new ways of organising and actually become relevant for a change, is it better to be politically homeless ("Free range Anarchist/ Marxist/ Socialist/ Unionist") so we can prepare for what's to come without the baggage of ideologies that were relevant for other times? Rosa Luxemburg would disagree, convinced that if one is not in the process of building the revolutionary party, one is relegated to the role of a leftist "swamp"-dweller. But Rosa, why would we build a party when we don't know how to actually make that party change jack shit right now? Right now, Rosa's party is a spectacle of the past, using language from a previous era.

The project of critical reflection and creating new forms of organising must be ongoing, and to this end, more weekends at Camp Eureka will be organised in the near future. To find out more, email communityunionweekends@gmail.com

GRASSROOTS ORGANISING AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS

From Mutiny #60 June/July 2011, By Lindsay Hawkins.

Since the NSW state election in March, the O'Farrell Government has wasted little time in moving against workers' rights in the public sector. A new law recently passed with upper house support from the Shooters and the Christian Democrats strips the state industrial court of its powers to arbitrate in pay disputes and tightens previous Labor requirements for public sector pay rises above 2.5% p.a. to be funded via offsets such as cuts in jobs and conditions.

A campaign by public sector unions has arisen in response to the Coalition Government's attack on the public sector. A rally of 12, 000 workers in the rain outside state parliament on Wednesday 15 June surpassed expectations; union officials had earlier anticipated 5000 people.

Organisation

To date the campaign from the leadership of the union movement has focused on the loss of powers of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission which they refer to as the "independent umpire". However, the idea that the court system is independent is a myth. The courts act for the most part at the behest of state and corporate power.

Instead of a political campaign that simply seeks to restore the power of the court system to mediate disputes and return to the way things were under Labor, unions should initiate an industrial campaign to fight directly for better pay and conditions by mobilising the collective power of the membership. The recent emergence of some independent grassroots industrial organising has raised this as a real possibility by posing a challenge to the usual bureaucratic, top-down controlled union campaigning that favours the petitioning and lobbying of MPs.

Several meetings of a new cross-union rank and file group called Union Activists have recently attracted 30-40 people to discuss plans for actions that involve and engage with rank and file union members. The meetings have been convened by some progressive union activists associated with the Greens with the support of the militant Fire Brigade Employees Union and have been attended by teachers, academics, nurses and public servants among others. Union Activists is calling for a 24-hour state-wide strike of public sector workers to coincide with the next Unions NSW stop work rally in early September. It is encouraging union members to move a motion at their next union meeting to that effect.

Another grassroots group, Power to the People, originally formed to fight the privatisation of electricity in NSW, has started meeting again to organise around the

public sector campaign. Both groups worked together to organise a successful Public Sector Symposium at the MUA office on 16 July that brought together rank and file activists from across the union movement.

Neo-Liberalism

It is a cornerstone of neo-liberal ideology to attack the public sector and promote privatisation, lay-offs and cuts to social spending. The major parties share the same agenda in this regard, though they are now reluctant to admit this, fearful of the backlash from a public that wants a functioning social infrastructure and does not like to see people sacked en masse.

Howard's defeat in 2007 was due in significant measure to the union movement's slick advertising and PR campaign that struck a chord with the Australian public. Earlier that year NSW Liberal leader Peter Debnam came unstuck after threatening to sack 29,000 public sector workers in the lead up to the state election. For their part Labor planned to cut 10,000 public sector jobs but the unions bargained them down to 5000 job cuts and considered it a victory. Following Labor's re-election in 2007 those jobs were quickly eliminated.

Democracy

Anarchists and other anti-statists might reasonably ask why we should bother campaigning to defend government control over the economy at all. Does it really matter whether production is under corporate or state control? Is there even any meaningful distinction between the two any more?

Ultimately we need to fight for our total liberation and for an end to all exploitation and oppression, but liberation doesn't happen instantly, it comes from building a culture of solidarity and resistance by working together. If we can block moves that further erode our quality of life, we lay the groundwork for more progressive, and one day hopefully, revolutionary social change.

Public sector jobs are typically higher paid, with better conditions and often with less work intensity than those in the private sector. The average rate of union membership is considerably higher because delegates and agitators are not illegally sacked with the same level of impunity as in the private sector.

Although state run services are also subject to market pressures there is not the same profit motive at work plus there is a popular expectation of quality services to the public so services are generally better resourced and cheaper by comparison with the private sector. Privatisation and cutbacks should be resisted and decent wages defended while we continue to organise for more permanent and far-reaching social change.

The NSW Government is the biggest employer in the country and this battle is being

watched closely by capitalists at home and abroad. If successful these changes will establish a pattern for ongoing attacks on workers by employers across the workforce and are a likely precursor to the kind of austerity measures that have set Europe on fire.

Partly in response to the recent 12 000 strong union rally and because of simultaneous riots and a general strike in Greece, a headline in the Sydney Morning Herald the following day read "Markets gripped by fear" which commented that "Investors get spooked when they see headlines, photos and footage of tens of thousands of protestors standing up to the painful austerity measures that have been imposed on Greece" as $25b was wiped from the Australian stock market in a "horror day" of trading.

It remains to be seen whether the increased level of organising at the base level in unions will continue to grow sufficiently to help build a new movement for mass democracy and workers' control in Australia but there are some promising early signs.

COUNTER-PLANNING FROM THE KITCHEN

ByNicole Cox and Silvia Federici. Falling Wall Press, 1975. From caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/20/nicole-cox-and-silvia-federici-counter-planning-from-the-kitchen/ - footnotes available online.

This article was originally written in reply to an article that appeared in the magazine Liberation, entitled 'Women & Pay for Housework' by Carol Lopate. Our reply was turned down by the editors of the magazine. We are publishing that reply because Lopate's article seems to state with more openness and crudeness than most not only the fundamental assumptions of the left, but its specific relation to the international feminist movement at this moment in time. We must add that by the publication of the two articles which appear in this pamphlet we are not opening a sterile debate with the left but closing one.

Since Marx, it has been clear that capital rules and develops through the wage, that is, that the foundation of capitalist society was the wage labourer and his or her direct exploitation. What has been neither clear nor assumed by the organizations of the working class movement is that precisely through the wage has the exploitation of the non-wage labourer been organized. This exploitation has been even more effective because the lack of a wage hid it . . . Where women are concerned, their labor appears to be a personal service outside of capital. (2)

It is certainly not accidental that over the last few months several journals of the left have published attacks on Wages for Housework. It is not only that whenever the women's movement has taken an autonomous position, the left has felt threatened. It is also that the left realizes that this perspective has implications which go beyond the 'woman question' and represent a clear break with their politics, past and present, both with respect to women and with respect to the rest of the working class. Indeed, the sectarianism the left has traditionally shown in relation to women's struggles is a direct consequence of their narrow understanding of the way capital rules and the direction class struggle must take and is taking to break this rule.

In the name of 'class struggle' and 'the unified interest of the class', the practice of the left has always been to select certain sectors of the working class as the revolutionary agents and condemn others to a merely supportive role for the struggles these sectors were waging. The left has thus reproduced in its organizational and strategic objectives the same divisions of the class which characterize the capitalist division of labour. In this respect, despite the variety of their tactical positions, the left is strategically one: when it comes to the choice of revolutionary subjects, Stalinists, Trotskyists, Anarcho-Libertarians, old and new left, all join hands with the same assumptions and arguments for a common cause.

They offer us 'development'

Since the left has accepted the wage as the dividing line between work and non-work, production and parasitism, potential power and absolute powerlessness, the enormous amount of wageless work women perform for capital within the home has totally escaped their analysis and strategy. Thus, from Lenin through Gramsci to Benston and Mitchell, the entire leftist tradition has agreed on the 'marginality' of housework to the reproduction of capital and, consequently, the marginality of the housewife to revolutionary struggle. According to the left, as housewives women are not suffering from capital, but are suffering precisely from the absence of it. Our problem, it seems, is that capital has failed to reach into and organize our kitchens and bedrooms, with the two-fold consequence that a) we presumably live at a feudal or at any rate precapitalist stage; b) whatever we do in these kitchens and bedrooms is at best irrelevant to any real social change. For obviously, if our kitchens are outside of capital, our struggle to destroy them will never succeed in causing capital to fall.

Why capital would allow so much unprofitable work, so much unproductive labour time, to survive is never questioned by the left, which is forever confident of capital's irrationality, mismanagement and planlessness. (Surely they can manage better!) Ironically, their profound ignorance of the specific relation of women to capital they have translated into a theory of women's political backwardness which can only be overcome by our entering the factory gates. Thus, the logic of an analysis which sees women's oppression as their exclusion from capitalist relations inevitably results in a strategy for us to enter these relations, rather than destroy them.

In this sense there is an immediate connection between the strategy of the left for women and their strategy for the Third World. In the same way as they want to bring women to the factories, they want to carry factories to the Third World. In both cases, they presume that the 'underdeveloped'- those of us who are wageless and work at a lower technological level-are backward with respect to the 'real working class' and can catch up only by obtaining more advanced capitalist exploitation, a bigger share of the work of the factory. In both cases, then, the struggle the left offers to the wageless, the 'underdeveloped', is not a revolutionary struggle, a struggle against capital, but a struggle for capital, in a more rationalized, developed and productive form. In our case they offer us not only the 'right to work' (this they offer every worker), but the right to work more, the right to be further exploited.

A new ground of struggle

The political foundation of Wages for Housework is precisely the refusal of this capitalist ideology of the left which equates wagelessness and low technological development with political backwardness, with absolute lack of power and ultimately with a need for capital to organize us as a precondition for our getting organized. It is our refusal to accept that because we are wageless or work at a lower technological level (and these are deeply interconnected) our needs must be different from those

of the rest of the working class. We refuse to accept that, while a male auto worker in Detroit can struggle against the assembly line, starting from our kitchens in the metropolis or from the Third World our goal must be that factory work which workers all over the world are increasingly refusing. Our rejection of leftist ideology is one and the same as our rejection of capitalist development as a road to liberation, or more specifically, our rejection of capital whatever form it takes. Inherent in this rejection is already a redefinition of what is capital and who is the working class, that is, a totally new evaluation of class forces and class needs.

Wages for Housework, then, is not a demand, one among others, but a political perspective which opens a new ground of struggle, beginning with women, for the entire working class. (3) This must be emphasized, since the reduction of Wages for Housework to a demand only is a common element in all the attacks of the left upon it, a way of discrediting it which gets them out of confronting the political issues it raises. In this sense, Lopate's article, 'Women & Pay for Housework' is just another, but a most extreme example, of reduction, distortion and avoidance. "Pay for Housework" misrepresents the issue, for it clearly ignores that a wage is not just a bit of money, but the fundamental expression of the power relation between capital and the working class. It is in character that Lopate should invent a new formula to label a position that by its nature could never be stated in these terms, even before she attempts her analysis. But maybe this is due to the necessity she feels to be "hazy in our visions" (4), which she firmly espouses as our female lot in her final message to women.

A more subtle way of discrediting Wages for Housework is to claim that this perspective is imported from Italy and bears little relevance to the situation in the U.S. where women "do work"(5). Here is another example of total misinformation. The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community -the only source referred to by Lopate – makes clear the international dimension out of which this perspective originates. But, in any case, tracing the geographical origin of Wages for Housework is irrelevant at the present stage of capital's international integration. What matters here is its political genesis, which is the refusal to see work-and therefore the power to destroy it-only in the presence of a wage. In our case, it is the end of the division between women 'who do work' and women 'who do not work' (they are 'just housewives'), which in Lopate implies that wageless work is not work, that housework is not work and, paradoxically, that only in the U.S. do most women work and struggle because so many here hold a second job. But there is a profound connection between this American exceptionalism and this anti-feminism. For not to see women's work in the home is to be blind to the work and struggles of the overwhelming majority of the world's population which is wageless. It is to ignore not only that American capital was built on slave labour as well as waged labour, but also that up to this day it thrives on the wageless work of millions of women and men in the fields, kitchens, prisons of the U.S. and throughout the world.

The hidden work

Beginning with ourselves as women we know that the working day for capital does not necessarily produce a pay-check and does not begin and end at the factory gates. And we rediscover, first, the nature and extent of housework itself. For as soon as we raise our heads from the socks we mend and the meals we cook and look at the totality of our working day, we see clearly that while this does not result in a wage for ourselves, we produce the most precious product to appear on the capitalist market: labour power. Housework, in fact, is much more than house cleaning. It is servicing the wage earner physically, emotionally, sexually, getting him ready to work day after day for the wage. It is taking care of our children-the future workers-assisting them from birth through their school years and ensuring that they too perform in the ways expected of them under capitalism. This means that behind every factory, behind every school, behind every office or mine is the hidden work of millions of women who have consumed their life, their labour power, in producing the labour power that works in that factory, school, office or mine. (6)

This is why to this day, both in the 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' countries, housework and the family on which it is centred are still the pillars of capitalist production. For the availability of a stable and well disciplined labour force is an essential condition of production at every stage of capitalist development. The conditions of our work vary from country to country. In some countries we are forced into an intensive production of children, in others we are told not to reproduce, particularly if we are black, or on welfare, or tend to reproduce 'troublemakers'. In some countries we produce unskilled labour for the fields, in others we produce skilled workers and technicians. But in every country our wageless slavery and the primary function we perform for capital are the same.

Getting a second job has never released us from the first. Two jobs have only meant for women even less time and energy to struggle against both. Moreover, a woman, working full-time in the home or outside of it as well, married or single, has to put hours of labour into reproducing her own labour power, and women well know the special tyranny of this task since a pretty dress and a nice hairdo are conditions for their getting the job, whether on the marriage market or on the wage labour market.

Thus we doubt very much that in the U.S. "schools, nurseries, daycare and television have taken away from mothers much of the responsibility for the socialization of their children", and that "The decrease in house size and the mechanization of housework has meant that the housewife is potentially left with much greater leisure time" (7).

Among other things, it is clear that day care and nurseries have never liberated any time for ourselves, but only time for additional work. As for technology, it is precisely in the U.S. that we can measure the enormous gap between the technology socially available and the technology that trickles into our kitchens. And in this case too, it

is our wageless condition that determines the quantity and quality of the technology we get. "If you are not paid by the hour, within certain limits, nobody cares how long it takes you to do your work." (8) If anything, the situation in the U.S. is immediate proof of the fact that neither technology nor a second job is capable of liberating women from the family and housework, and that: "Producing a technician is not a less burdensome alternative to producing an unskilled worker if between these two fates does not stand the refusal of women to work for free, whatever might be the technological level at which this work is done, the refusal of women to live in order to produce, whatever might be the particular type of child to be produced." (9)

It remains to be clarified that to say that the work we perform in the home is capitalist production is not at all the expression of our wish to be legitimated as part of the 'productive forces', or in other words, a resort to moralism. It is only from the capitalist viewpoint that being productive is a moral virtue, not to say a moral imperative. From the viewpoint of the working class, being productive simply means being exploited. "To be a productive labourer is, therefore, not a piece of luck but a misfortune " (Marx). Thus we derive very little "self-esteem" (10) from it. But when we say that housework-still our primary identification as women is a moment of capitalist production we clarify our specific function within the capitalist division of labour and, most important, the specific forms our attack against it must take. Our power does not come from anyone's recognition of our place in the cycle of production, but from our capacity to struggle against it. Not production per se but the struggle against it and the power to withhold it have always been the decisive factors in the distribution of social wealth. Ultimately when we say that we produce capital we are saying that we can and want to destroy it, rather than engage in a losing battle to move from one form and degree of exploitation to another.

We must also clarify that we are not "borrowing categories from the Marxist world" (11). We are not sociologists who have transformed Marx into a categorizing intellectual. Marx may never have dealt directly with housework. Yet, we freely admit that we are less eager than Lopate to liberate ourselves from Marx, to the extent that Marx has given us an analysis which to this day is irreplaceable for understanding how we, all of us, function for capitalist society. We also suspect that Marx's apparent indifference to housework might be grounded in precise historical factors. By this we do not mean simply that dose of male chauvinism that Marx certainly shares with his contemporaries (and not only with them). It is clear that at the time when Marx was writing, the nuclear family and housework which is its central function had yet to be massively created. (12) What Marx had before his eyes was the proletarian woman, who was fully employed along with her husband and children in the factory, and the bourgeois woman who had a maid and, whether or not she also worked, was not producing the commodity labour power. The absence of the nuclear family did not mean that workers stopped meeting and copulating. It meant, however, that it was impossible to speak of family relations and housework when each member of the

family spent 15 hours a day in the factory, that is, when the time and even the physical space were not available for 'family life'.

It was only after terrible epidemics and overwork decimated the working class, and most important, after waves of proletarian struggles through the 1830s and '40s brought England close to revolution, that the need for a more stable and disciplined workforce led capital to plan the nuclear family. A whole set of phenomena indicate that far from being a pre-capitalist structure, the family as we know it in the West is a specific creation of capital for capital, an institution that is supposed to guarantee both the quantity and quality of labour power and its control. Thus, "like the trade union the family protects the worker but also ensures that he and she will never be anything but workers. And that is why the struggle of the woman of the working class against the family is crucial." (13)

Our wagelessness as a discipline

The family, in fact, is essentially the institutionalization of our wageless labour, of our wageless dependence on men, and consequently, the institutionalization of a division of power which has successfully functioned in disciplining us and the men as well. For our wagelessness, our dependence in the home, has functioned to keep the men tied to their jobs, by ensuring that whenever they wanted to refuse their work they would be faced with the wife and children who depended on their wage. Here is the basis of those "old habits-the men's and ours" that Lopate has found so difficult to break. For unless we believe in free will, a liberal myth, we realize that it is no accident that it is so difficult for a man "to ask for special time schedules so he can be involved equally in childcare" (14). Not an insignificant reason that men cannot arrange for part-time hours is that the male wage is crucial for the survival of the family, even when the woman brings in a second wage. And if we "found ourselves preferring or finding less consuming jobs, which have left us more time for housecare " (15) it is because we were resisting an intensified exploitation, being consumed in a factory and then being consumed more rapidly at home.

Moreover, our wagelessness in the home is and has been the primary cause of our weakness on the wage labour market. It is certainly not an an accident that we always get the lowest paid jobs or that whenever women enter a male sector the wages go down. They know very well that we are used to working for nothing and they know even better that we are so desperate for some money of our own that they can get us at a very low price. In any case, since female has become synonymous with housewife, we carry that identity and the 'homely skills' we have acquired from birth wherever we go. Thus the nature of waged female employment is often an extension of our role in the home, which means that often that road to the wage has led us to more housecare. For the fact that housework is unwaged has given to this socially imposed condition a natural appearance ('femininity') which affects us all wherever we go, whatever we do. Thus we don't need to be told that "the essential thing to remember is that we are a

SEX". (16) For years capital has told us we're only good for sex and making babies. This is the sexual division of labour and we refuse to eternalize it, as necessarily happens when we ask: "What does being female actually mean; what, if any, specific qualities necessarily and for all time adhere to that characteristic?" (17) To ask this question is to beg for a sexist and racist reply. Who is to say who we are? All we can find out now is who we are not, to the degree that through struggle we gain the power to break our capitalist identification. It has always been the ruling class, or those who aspire to rule, who have presupposed a natural and eternal human personality: it was to eternalize their power over us.

Glorification of the family

Not surprisingly, then, Lopate's quest for the essence of femaleness leads her to the most blatant glorification of our wageless work in the home and of unwaged labour in general:

> The home and the family have traditionally provided the only interstice of capitalist life in which people can possibly serve each other's needs out of love or care, even if it is often also out of fear and domination. Parents take care of children at least partly out of love . . . I even think that this memory lingers on with us as we grow up so that we always retain with us as a kind of Utopia the work and caring which come out of love, rather than being based on financial reward. (18)

The literature of the women's movement has shown abundantly the devastating effects this love, care and service has had on women. These are the chains which have tied us to a condition of near slavery. We definitely refuse to retain with us and elevate to a Utopia for the future the miseries of our mothers and grandmothers and our own misery as children! When the State does not pay a wage, it is those who are loved, cared for, wageless and even more powerless who must pay with their lives.

We also refuse Lopate's suggestion that asking for financial reward "would only serve to obscure from us still further the possibilities of free and unalienated labour," (19) which simply means that the quickest way to 'disalienate' work is to do it for free. No doubt President Ford would appreciate this suggestion. The voluntary labour on which the modern State increasingly rests is based on precisely such as Lopate's charitable dispensation of our time. It seems to us, however, that if instead of simply relying on love and care, our mothers had had a financial reward, they would have been less bitter, less dependent, less blackmailed, and less blackmailing to their children who were constantly reminded of their mothers' sacrifices. Our mothers would have had more time and power to struggle against that work and would have left us at a more advanced stage in that struggle.

It is the essence of capitalist ideology to glorify the family as a "private world", the last frontier where men and women "keep [their] souls alive" (20), and it is no wonder that

this ideology is enjoying a renewed popularity with capitalist planners in our present times of 'crisis' and 'austerity' and 'hardship'. As Russell Baker recently stated it in the New York Times ('Love and Potatoes', Nov. 25, 1974), love kept us warm during the Depression and we had better bring it with us on our present excursion into hard times. Sir Keith Joseph in Britain makes the same point in a more moralistic form- rather like Lopate. The New York Times knew it was important and reprinted it. This ideology, which opposes the family (or the community) to the factory, the personal to the social, the private to the public, productive to unproductive work, is totally functional to our enslavement to the home, which, to the extent that it is wageless, has always appeared as an act of love. Thus this ideology is deeply rooted in the capitalist division of labour, which finds one of its clearest expressions in the organization of the nuclear family. But the way the wage relation has mystified the social function of the family is an extension of the way capital mystifies waged labour, and the subordination of all social relations to the 'cash nexus'.

Marx clarified a long time ago that the wage hides all the unpaid work that goes into profit. But measuring work by the wage also hides the extent to which all our social relations have been subordinated to the relations of production, the extent to which every moment of our lives functions for the production and reproduction of capital. The wage, in fact (and that includes the lack of it), has allowed capital to obscure the length of our working day. Work appears as one compartment of life, which takes place only in certain areas. The time we consume in the social factory, preparing ourselves for work, or going to work, restoring our "muscles, nerves, bones and brains" (21) with quick snacks, quick sex, movies, etc., all this appears as leisure, free time, individual choice.

Different labour markets

In the same way, capital's use of the wage also obscures who is the working class and successfully serves capital's need to divide in order to rule. Through the wage relation, not only has capital organized different labour markets (a labour market for blacks, youth, women and white males), but it has opposed a 'working class' to a 'non-working' proletariat, supposedly parasitic on the work of the former. As welfare recipients we are told we live off the taxes of the 'working class'; as housewives we are constantly pictured as the bottomless pits of our husbands' pay checks.

But ultimately the social weakness of the wageless has been and is the weakness of the entire working class with respect to capital. As the history of the runaway shop continually witnesses, a reserve of wageless labour both in the 'underdeveloped' countries and in the metropolis has allowed capital to move from those areas where labour had made itself too expensive, thus undermining the power workers there had reached.

Whenever capital could not run to the Third World, it opened the gates of the factories to women, blacks and youth in the metropolis or to migrants from the Third World.

Thus, it is no accident that while capital is based on waged labour, more than half of the world's populationis still unwaged. Wagelessness and underdevelopment, in fact, are essential elements of capitalist planning, nationally and internationally. For they are powerful means to make workers compete on the national and international labour market and ultimately to make us believe that our interests are different and contradictory.

Here are the bases for the ideology of sexism, racism and welfarism (to despise those workers who have succeeded in getting some money from the State) which are the direct expressions of different labour markets and therefore different ways of regulating and dividing the working class. If we ignore this use of capitalist ideology and its roots in the wage relation, we not only end up by considering racism, sexism and welfarism as moral diseases, a product of 'miseducation', a 'false consciousness', but we are confined to a strategy of 'education' which leaves nothing but "moral imperatives to bolster our side" (23).

We finally find a point of agreement with Lopate when she says that our strategy relieves us from the reliance on "men's being 'good' people" to attain liberation (24). As the struggles of blacks in the sixties clearly showed, it was not by good words, but by organization of their power that they made their needs 'understood'. In our case, trying to educate men always meant once again that our struggle was privatized and fought in the solitude of our kitchens and bedrooms. There we could not find the power to attack capital acting against us directly or through men. Power educates. First men will fear, then they will learn because capital will fear. For we are not struggling for a more equal redistribution of the same work. We are struggling to put an end to that work, and the first step is to put a price tag on it.

Wage demands

Our power as women begins with the social struggle for the wage, not to be let into the wage relation (for, though we are unwaged, we were never out of it) but to be let out, for every sector of the working class to be let out. Here we have to clarify the nature of wage struggles. When the left maintains that wage demands are 'economistic', 'union demands', they seem to ignore that the wage, as well as the lack of it, is the direct measure of our exploitation and therefore the direct expression of the power relation between capital and the working class and within the working class. They also seem to ignore the fact that the wage struggle takes many forms and it is not confined to wage raises. Reduction of work-time, more and better social services, as well as money-all these are wage gains which immediately determine how much of our labour is taken away from us and therefore how much power we have over our lives. This is why the wage has been the traditional ground of struggle between capital and the working class. And therefore, as an expression of the class relation the wage always has two sides: the side of capital which uses it to control the working class by trying to ensure that every raise is matched by an increase in productivity; and the side of the

• working class which increasingly is fighting for more money, more power, and less work.

As the history of the present capitalist crisis demonstrates, fewer and fewer workers have been willing to sacrifice their lives at the service of capitalist production; thus, less and less have any workers listened to the calls for increased productivity. (25) But when the 'fair exchange' between wages and productivity is upset, the struggle for wages becomes a direct attack on capital's profit and its capacity to extract surplus labour from us. Thus the struggle for the wage is at the same time a struggle against the wage, for the power it expresses and against the capitalist relation it embodies. In the case of the wageless, in our case, the struggle for the wage is even more clearly an attack on capital. Wages for Housework means first of all that capital will have to pay for the enormous amount of social services which now they are saving on our backs. But most important, to demand Wages for Housework is by itself the refusal to accept our work as a biological destiny, which is an indispensable condition for our struggle against it. Nothing, in fact, has been so powerful in institutionalizing our work, the family and our dependence on men as the fact that not a wage but 'love' always paid for this work. For us as well as for the waged worker, the wage is not the price of a productivity deal. In return for a wage we will not work as before and more than before; we will work less. We want a wage to be able to dispose of our time and our energies, to struggle, and not be confined by a second job because of our need for financial independence.

MOREOVER, OUR STRUGGLE FOR THE WAGE OPENS FOR THE WAGED AND THE UNWAGED ALIKE THE QUESTION OF THE REAL LENGTH OF THE WORKING DAY. UP TO NOW THE WORKING CLASS, MALE AND FEMALE, HAD ITS WORKING DAY DEFINED BY CAPITAL-FROM PUNCHING IN TO PUNCHING OUT. THAT DEFINED THE TIME WE BELONGED TO CAPITAL AND THE TIME WE BELONGED TO OURSELVES. BUT WE HAVE NEVER BELONGED TO OURSELVES, WE HAVE ALWAYS BELONGED TO CAPITAL EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES. AND IT IS TIME THAT WE MADE CAPITAL PAY FOR EVERY MOMENT OF IT. In class terms this is to demand a wage for every moment we live at the service of capital.

Making capital pay

This is the new ground of struggle for every sector of the working class. In fact this class perspective has expressed itself in the streets in the struggles of the sixties, both in the U.S. and internationally. In the U.S. the struggles of blacks and welfare mothers-the Third World of the metropolis-was the revolt of the wageless against the use capital has made of them and their refusal of the only alternative capital offers: more work. Those struggles which had their centre of power in the community were not for development, but were for the reappropriatioji of the social wealth that capital has accumulated from the wageless as well as from the waged. In this sense, they

challenged fundamentally the capitalist organization of society that imposes work as the only condition of our being allowed to live. They also challenged the leftist dogma that only in the factories can the working class organize its power.

We never expected the left to base its analysis on the struggles of the working class. By its nature the left imposes goals which are "hard for workers to visualize" (26), after which they conclude that the working class is backward and doesn't know what it needs. If Lopate had been less busy 'conceptualizing' and 'communicating' to the workers what their needs should be (we had hoped that the women's movement had helped us to eliminate this sort of elitism, but clearly vanguardism dies hard as its new appearance in the form of libertarianism demonstrates), she would have realized that you don't need to enter a factory to be part of a working class organization. When she says that "the ideological preconditions for working-class solidarity are networks and connections which arise from working together" and "These preconditions cannot arise out of isolated women working in separate homes" (27), she blatantly ignores the struggles these "isolated" women waged in the sixties (rent strikes, welfare struggles, etc.)- She assumes that we cannot organize ourselves if we are not first organized by capital; and since she denies that capital has organized us already, she denies the existence of the struggle. In any case, to confuse capital's Organization of our work- whether in the kitchen or in the factory-with the organization of our struggle against it is the quickest and surest road to our defeat. First, to struggle for work is already a defeat, and furthermore every new level of their organization of our work will be turned against us to exploit us and isolate us even more. For it is an illusion that capital does not divide us when we are not working in isolation.

In opposition to these divisions, which is how they have organized us, we have to organize according to the bonds of our needs. In this sense, Wages for Housework is as much a refusal of the socialization of the factory as a refusal of capital's rationalization and socialization of the home.

We do not believe, in fact, that the revolution can be reduced to a combination of a consumer's report and a time and motion study as in Lopate's proposal:

> . . . we need to look seriously at the tasks which are 'necessary' to keep a house going . . . We need to investigate the time- and laboursaving devices and decide which are useful and which merely cause a further degradation of housework. (28)

It is not technology per se that degrades us, but the use capital makes of it, to maintain our social relations in the family and/the rest of society. Moreover, 'self-management' and 'workers' control' always existed in the home. We always had a choice of Monday or Saturday to do the laundry, or the choice between buying a dishwasher or a vacuum cleaner, provided we could afford either. Thus we do not ask capital to change the nature of our work, but we struggle to refuse the work of reproducing ourselves and

others which becomes work precisely because we reproduce ourselves and others as workers, as labour power, as commodities- as objects. An indispensable condition of moving towards this goal is that this work be recognized as work through a wage. Obviously as long as wages exist so does capital. To this extent we do not say that achieving a wage is the revolution. We say, however, that it is a revolutionary strategy, for it undermines the role we are assigned to in the capitalist division of labour and consequently changes the power relations within the working class in terms more favourable to us and to the unity of the class.

As for the financial aspects of Wages for Housework, they are "highly problematical" (29) only if we take the viewpoint of capitalthe viewpoint of the Treasury Department-which always claims poverty when it is replying to the working class. Since we are not the Treasury Department and have no aspiration to be, we cannot see with their eyes, and we did not even conceive of planning for them systems of payment, wage differentials, productivity deals. It is not for us to put limits on our power, it is not for us to measure our value. It is only for us to organize a struggle to get all of what we want, for us all, and on our terms. For our aim is to be priceless, to price ourselves out of the market, for housework and factory work and office work to be 'uneconomic'.

Similarly, we completely reject the argument that some other sector of the working class would pay for our eventual gain. According to this logic we could say in reverse that waged workers are now being paid with money capital does not give us. But this is precisely the way the State talks-Nixon, or post-Nixon. In fact, to say the demands for social welfare programs by blacks in the sixties had a "devastating effect on any long-range strategy . . . on white-black relations" since "workers knew that they, not the corporations, ended up paying for those programs" (30) is plain racism. If we assume that every struggle ends up inevitably in a redistribution of poverty rather than in an attack on capital's profit, we assume a priori the defeat of the working class. Indeed, Lopate's article is written under the sign of defeatism, which is nothing else than accepting capitalist institutions as inevitable. Thus Lopate cannot imagine that when capital tries to lower other workers' wages in order to give us a wage, those workers will be able to struggle to defend their own interest and ours too. She assumes also that "obviously, men would receive the highest wage for their work in the home" (31)-in short, that we will never win. She sees housewives only as poor victims incapable of any struggle, so that she cannot imagine that we could organize collectively to shut our doors in the face of any supervisor trying to control our work.

As wageless housewives, we have been forced to internalize capital's rules so well that we haven't needed a supervisor, because we have done automatically what we were expected to do. We have hated ourselves, because we have been compelled to 'love and care' "out of fear and domination". (32) A wage for that work would give us the power to direct our hatred away from ourselves and towards the destruction of capital.

DIRECT UNIONISM

A discussion paper put together by some members of the Industrial Workers of the World revolutionary syndicalist union, arguing for the organisation to build a network of militants rather than attempt to represent members. The paper was never fully finished. The early parts are finished but as the paper goes on it gets rougher and toward the end is more like notes. (From libcom.org, edited down for this reader). Full paper at http://libcom.org/library/direct-unionism-discussion-paper-09052011

Part 1: Organizing the Direct Unionist Way

Part one of Direct Unionism will lay out one way the IWW can move forward in our organizing and do so free of the restraints of labor law, bureaucracy, and contractualism. As with the rest of the pamphlet, part one is written in a 'question and answer' style that is designed to be both thought-provoking and easily understandable. To achieve this, we've attempted to avoid long boring sentences, academic language, and jargon that may be unfamiliar to newer members.

Section 1: What would a direct unionist campaign look like?

In a nutshell, we are proposing that instead of focusing on contracts, workplace elections, or legal procedures, IWW members should strive to build networks of militants in whatever industry they are employed. These militants will then agitate amongst their co-workers and lead direct actions over specific grievances in their own workplaces. The goal of such actions will not be union recognition from a single boss. Instead, the goal of the actions is to build up leadership and consciousness amongst other workers. Once a 'critical mass' of workers have experience with, and an understanding of, direct action the focus will be on large scale industrial actions that address issues of wages and conditions across entire regions or even whole countries. It will be from this base of power that the IWW will establish itself as a legitimate workers' organization.

...

Section 3: Are we trying to build a "union"?

In a broad sense, yes, because anytime two or more workers take collective action, they are functioning as a union. However, in a more narrow sense—and since direct unionism does not have recognition as an immediate goal—we are operating outside what is traditionally understood as a union. It is possible that after we've organized a large percentage of a particular workforce we will seek to function as 'the vehicle of workplace struggle.' In other words, instead of IWW members contributing to workplace struggle as organized workers, we will force the employer to recognize the IWW as the collective voice of the workforce. However, in the short-term, and possibly for a very long time (or even forever), the goal will be to involve as many workers as possible the collective decision-making process, regardless of IWW affiliation. In the early stages of a campaign, the organizing committee will organize meetings

of sympathetic workers to decide how grievances will be addressed. In a more fully developed campaign, the goal will be to arrange well-attended mass meetings that will decide upon strategy and actions.

What about solidarity unionism?

Throughout the IWW's history we've attempted 'rebrand' unionism to reflect our ideals of direct democracy, militancy, and overt anti-capitalism. One of the most inspiring examples of this is "solidarity unionism." Solidarity unionism is based on the idea that workers only need solidarity to function effectively as a union—no bureaucrats, officials, or lawyers required. Solidarity unionism rejects the idea that a union needs recognition from the boss, or even a majority presence, to successfully improve shopfloor conditions.

Simply put: effective agitation, intelligent organizing, and committed militants held together by the bonds of solidarity— in a word, solidarity unionism—has always been and will always be the backbone of the labor movement. Although we whole-heartedly agree with the ideas and ideals of solidarity unionism, we feel the net of solidarity unionism has been a bit too widely cast (in contract campaigns, for example) to fully capture how we feel a non-contractual organizing strategy should function.

Why "direct unionism"?

Although we most certainly take inspiration from solidarity unionism, minority unionism, and industrial unionism (and incorporate many of their principles in to our strategy), we decided the term "direct unionism" best fits how we believe the IWW should organize. Direct unionism—at its very core—rejects contractualism and states that workers should directly control their workplace organizations. Accordingly, workers should reject any attempts to place a block between them their struggle—including contracts, union "reps," casework, and full-time outside organizers.

How important is signing up workers into the IWW?

The authors of this pamphlet believe that informal participation in workplace struggle, not formal membership in the IWW, should be the first concern of a workplace organizer. However, we realize that both participation and membership are important aspects of a successful campaign.

Allow us to elaborate:

1) Union membership is, and should be, an important part of any campaign. It helps sustain struggle--both in terms of finances and stability—and encourages workers to step up into leadership positions.

2) Membership in an organization reinforces a feeling of belonging to 'something bigger than yourself' and of being 'plugged in' to a collective struggle. The IWW, with its open membership policies, combats the 'club mentality' that often exists in any type of social movement.

3) Membership = Accountability. By encouraging our co-workers to join up, it provides an extra way for them to hold organizers accountable. Alternatively, if a shop militant steps up into a leadership positions, his or her membership in the IWW provides another way for participants in shop floor actions to hold her or him to account.

We also recognize that some workers may be reluctant join the IWW. Perhaps they don't plan on working in a particular shop for very long or aren't comfortable putting themselves 'on the line' as a union member just yet. We feel an organizer's time is much better spent encouraging workplace actions instead of convincing co-workers to take out a red card. In fact, there may be certain situations where it may be 'safer,' smarter, and more strategic that an organizer begins leading actions before announcing he or she belongs to the IWW. (See the next section.) After all, a successful action turns 'regular' workers into militants faster than debate or pamphlet ever could. At the same time, even an unsuccessful action—if properly orchestrated—makes clear the class analysis that underpins the beliefs of the IWW.

Why do direct unionists believe we don't always need to "fly the union flag" to win the union's battles?

Direct unionists recognize there are good tactical reasons to begin fighting gripes in the workplace without letting the boss know a union is involved. It can buy us time by building the union through struggle before management goes on the attack. Often grievances appear like an upswing in everyday resentment, and bosses are quick to dole out concessions to go back to normal life. With a union however, the boss may take drastic measures, even going so far as to close a business than suffer the indignity of sharing power with organized workers. The repression is much more easily dealt with after a period of exercising collective power and inoculating against battles to come.

Organizing in such a manner allows organizers to think strategically about how we make ourselves known, when we ask for membership, and when (or even if) it is appropriate to build the IWW as the 'vehicle of struggle'.3 The answers to these questions should help organizers adapt to individual situations, while changing working conditions for the better along the way.

Direct unionism, then, lowers the bar of initial activity, while avoiding many of the problems of unions as outside organizations ("service unionism"). This isn't to say that we never come out as a union early on, just that we should do so because there are no other options and that no gains can be made without doing so (or more gains can be made in the long run by doing so).

What is the difference between qualitative growth and quantitative growth?

As direct unionists we believe that the IWW needs to concentrate not on simply

growing numerically, but increasing the organizing capabilities of our membership. Hence, we believe the union needs to focus on growing in terms of quality—qualitatively—rather than simply believing we build the union by numbers alone (i.e. quantitatively).

The union has already taken steps to do this very thing. The Organizer Training Committee, with its twin goals of training Wobblies in the concepts and practices of successful organizing, is one example of this. However, we must build on such accomplishments. We need to find other ways to train members to not only support the IWW in principle but to begin agitating in their own workplaces. In fact, if every IWW member is not actively organizing where they work, the union is not functioning as effectively as it should. We believe the implementation of the industrial strategy (to be discussed in part one, section five) will help to facilitate workers becoming more active in their own workplaces and, thus, help grow the union qualitatively.

There is one other very real reason to focus on qualitative growth: just joining the IWW does not prepare one for struggle. We could sign up 100% of a workplace, but without proper preparation, the organization is nothing more than a paper tiger. Organization and struggle builds membership, not the other way around.
When organizing new workers, we believe the direct unionist strategy will encourage both quantitative and qualitative growth. Since workers are included in workplace organizing regardless of membership, co-workers get to see the IWW in action before ever committing to join the union. Successful organizing, in turn, opens up a place to begin discussions on topics such as class, capitalism, and the labor movement. Once workers are committed to the IWW—both in principle and in practice—then they can take out a red card. In such a way, direct unionism combines the three Wobbly principles of "Agitate, Educate, Organize" and exposes workers to them before they even fill out a membership application.

We do [sic] we need to combat the assumption 'join the IWW and the struggle will come to you'?

Because of our history, professed militancy, and high ideals, the IWW recruits many younger political activists who are attracted to our open commitment to class struggle. However, the IWW is rife with stories of new members who joined up, got their co-workers to do the same, and then didn't know where to go from there. It is situations like this that make us emphasize, once again, the need to undertake the same types of direct action grievances listed in section two. After all, struggle is a process. It is created and certain elements of consciousness, confidence, organization, and accountability must be present if we are to make headway. These facts must be known by newer members if the IWW hopes to effectively engage in workplace resistance. Worse yet, if we don't convey this information effectively we run the very real risk of falling into service unionism, an idea that will be explored more in part three, "Why

organize without contracts?"

Section 4: The need for organization

We realize that our description of direct unionism could make it appear we are "fetishizing" "informal workplace resistance groups". (In other words, advocating only for groups of pissed-off workers to concentrate on fighting grievances in their own workplaces.) Such groups certainly have a place and often provide the springboard for larger organizing efforts. Yet for any struggle to become fully developed, formal organization is eventually going to be necessary.

As our organizing experiences have taught us, overreliance on informal work groups is a real risk. This can take the form of always expecting the dedicated members we already have to step up to fulfil too many (or even all) organizing tasks. This lends itself to accountability problems and 'clique-control'. This can cripple even the most promising campaign. What is needed, instead, is (1) formalized accountability from our organizers and (2) for militants from different workplaces to link up into industrial networks, a topic that will be covered in section five.

The need for organization begins in the workplace itself. Some of this is quite simple: formal bylaws, scheduled meetings, regular reporting, and votes on all important matters. Likewise, it is important to maintain a record of struggle. If a campaign is public, newsletters provide one way to do this. In an 'under the radar' campaign, militants may want to write (or even record) 'testimonials' that highlight changes that came as a result of direct action. Besides being a record of successful (and not so successful) tactics, such testimonials can be read by future workers to give them a sense of the history of the campaign.

Such testimonials, we should note, carry a very real danger. If they fall into the hands of a boss, the can spell trouble for the workers who created them. If a campaign decides to use testimonials, it may make sense to have them typed up anonymously or, if they are recorded, to have them re-read and re-recorded by a Fellow Worker who does not work in that particular shop.

The need for organization also has implications for bringing new workers into a campaign. This can be a tricky process, but is also one that is absolutely key if the IWW is to survive and grow as a shopfloor presence. One way to accomplish this is for an 'ambassador' to reach out to each employee who is not actively involved. For example, if a new hire comes into the shop, a friendly member of the organizing committee can strike up a conversation about something that has recently changed. He or she might say, "They used to make us stay for an extra fifteen minutes after we'd clocked out to clean up. They stopped, though, since we let them know we weren't going to put up with it. If they ask you to stay late, come let me know and we'll work out a response. Don't worry, workers here are willing to stand up for one another." In this way, the organizer has introduced the new hire into a culture of solidarity and

offered support in advance, but not scared off him or her by asking them to join a union, pay dues, or 'resist the tyranny of the boss class.' Once the new employee is a bit more comfortable in their job (made so through the support of members on the organizing committee) or has mentioned a grievance, then s/he can be brought into the more formal network of workplace resistance. All of this confirms something that all IWWs should keep in mind: organizing is about small steps and building relationships of trust. This must always be our guiding principle when we organize.

A final note on organization: direct unionists want to build the form of organization that makes the most sense for the workplace, the industry, and the current level of class struggle in society as whole. We try not to overemphasize formalism. In other words, we don't judge a struggle simply on its particular form—be it the union form, the workplace assembly form, or a "workers council" form. No form is perfect and the content and the goals of a struggle must be taken into account. In the final analysis, the goal of direct unionism is to create 'practiced democracy, self-activity, and self-leadership' within the context of a 'participatory, collective, and class-conscious proletarian struggle.' What this struggle may look like is going to vary from place to place and time to time. The goal, however, never changes.4

How will non-contractual organizing maintain workplace gains?

This is no small question. Since the end goal is not the signing of a contract (or, in many instances, even formal recognition from the boss) it is up to IWW members to create a culture of resistance that will continually defend gains. (In a sense, this is not much different than a contract since bosses regularly violate a contract when they don't think workers are organized enough to offer a defense.) To describe how we think this is best achieved we return to a concept developed by the IWW close to one-hundred years ago: job conditioning. Job conditioning is based on the idea that once experience, confidence, and solidarity is built up through small job actions, workers can begin tackling larger issues by 'playing by their own rules.'

In many factories, including non-union ones, workers set the pace of production by refusing to work faster than a given speed. If the workers decide they will only make ten tables in an hour and they all stick to it, there is nothing the boss can do to change it. The workers have conditioned the boss through their solidarity and willingness to stand together. Even some of the IWW's greatest achievements were won through job conditioning. In the early 1900's when the IWW won the 8-hour day in the timber and wheat fields it was through a combination of raw industrial power (willingness to strike) and job conditioning: workers simply walked off the job after eight hours. We realize these examples may seem a bit long-sighted given where the IWW is right now. What's important is that they were only possible because workers built up a culture that relied on solidarity and trust to establish and maintain gains. As direct unionists move forward in our organizing, we need to stress to our co-workers that solidarity and solidarity alone is the only weapon workers can rely on to make and

cement gains in the workplace (not labor law, contracts, politicians, or union bosses). inoculation process that the Organizer Training 101 addresses and the inoculation process all direct unionists should be taking their co-workers through.

Finally, we'd like to note that direct unionism does not reject recognition from the boss. It only rejects 'official' recognition and the legalistic methods (contracts, labor board elections, union registration) used to do so. However, we also recognize that even non-contractual recognition carries risks and that in certain instances it is just not a realistic goal.

This pamphlet intentionally stresses the 'here and now', but if we reach a point where the IWW is a majority presence in a shop, recognition won't go much further than there being a recognized IWW delegate who is management's "first point of call" when it comes to shop conditions. The rep—who will always be a member of the staff—will be limited by the fact all decisions must still be put to a vote of the entire workforce (with the exception of scabs, management stools, etc). The focus, at least in the foreseeable future, should be the creation of industrial networks, a topic we now turn to...

METHODS OF STRUGGLE

Thursday 29th July 2010
By 'an anarchosyndicalist militant', taken from libcom.org.

The following text was written to help people discover, remind themselves or popularize the various syndicalist methods of struggle because in any battle, one must start from a few key ideas:

Hitting the enemy harder than they can hit you, or better - hitting them so they can't hit back.

Analysing the power balance:
- How great are our numbers
- How much other workers and the general population will sympathise with or reject our struggle
- What are our financial constraints, ie. financial and material resources available to continue the fight

Avoiding exhaustion: fighting too arduously from the start can be a weakness: the employers are prepared to overcome short term difficulties by transferring production, resuming production in other places, maintaining stocks, using scabs, financial reserves, etc.

Knowing how to stop a fight, avoiding fighting to the end when the situation is unfavourable. A continued minority occupation of a business ends up offering the boss discontented people who can he can turn against the strikers. Wages lost become so great that resuming a struggle becomes difficult. Disillusionment makes mobilisation harder.

Allowing for a return to the struggles or demands.

Analysing the history, strategy, and objectives of the forces in play: Bosses/ workers: (moderate or hardline employers, combative or passive employees) Organisation/struggles (whether the unions are weak or radical, if the fights benefit from autonomous experience etc..)

The fights are defined by the employment category, territorial extent or by their content:
Employment category: struggles of unskilled workers, skilled workers, postal workers or nurses, white collar workers, teachers, technicians etc ... called sectional struggles. If the struggle involves the entire company or institution and deals with claims for all staff, the struggle is industrial.

Territoriality: if the struggle takes place in one particular location of a business, it is a local fight. Example: Visteon.

A fight at the group level is located in several places but within the same company: Example: the postal strikes.

The struggle may be in a sector or industry: examples: the health sector or education sector. The struggle can take place in all business lines and sites.

Content: content of the struggle can be material (wages, pensions, working conditions hours, health and safety), political (changing a law, a critique of anti social policy, gaining new union rights, the formation of worker counter-power

within a company...) It can also of course combine the two aspects: for example the simplification and standardisation over grades and qualifications in a given industry. This material claim allows the unification of workers in the same industry and thus open the prospect of larger struggles.

The fight may also simply be held in solidarity with other struggles.

---The different types of struggle---

Verbal protest : this type of struggle is the most simple.

Petition: a written denunciation, a complaint, expressing a desire, a disapproval. The petition can, sometimes, exert influence to obtain a list of benefits, often illusory, insubstantial or demagogic (designed for political power by appealing to rhetoric). Some unions which do or wish to do little or nothing engage in petitions for an election or to keep their conscience clean.

Walkout: the cessation of activity for a few hours at most. The stoppage expresses a greater dissatisfaction, the birth of a certain radicalisation. The stoppage is used as pressure for negotiations on short term or minor claims. Example: the lack of ventilation or heating, breaks, bonus issues, problems with safety equipment etc.

Partial strike: Workers stopping in rotation. Advantage: minimum loss of wage to individuals whilst the company is practically paralysed and the company still pays its employees who are now less productive or indeed idle. Employers try to put to work non striking employees, supervisors, agency staff or contractors. If this proves insufficient it may close the company for a while, locking workers out rather than paying people to be idle.

Go slow: a reduction in the rate or work to become as unproductive as possible.

Work to rule: excessively strict observance of instructions and regulations which hinders the proper functioning of the work.

Limited strike: workers stop working for a specific amount of time.

Indefinite strike: cessation of work by employees until they have resolved the issues in the conflict (or otherwise decide to return) Advantage: expresses a degree of radicalisation, involvement in struggle, blocks all or part of production. Disadvantage: substantial loss of wages for the striking workers. The company may continue production with non striking workers, contracted staff or they may move production to another site.

Picket line: The creation of barriers to prevent non striking workers entering the workplace. The material conditions of pickets are often deplorable: no shelter, being subject to the weather. Some non striking workers sometimes manage to enter the premises or remain inside to ensure continued production.

Occupation: The striking workers occupy the workplace and evacuate all non striking workers. They take control of meeting rooms, canteens, dormitories,

copiers, telephones and vehicles.

The internal action: limited to within the company, confined within the institution.

The exterior action: the invasion and occupation of institutions, establishments, administrations or government departments favourable to the employer: the Department for Work and Pensions, courts, city halls, local political offices, newspaper headquarters, the Chamber of Commerce, management's living quarters, or a company to which production has been moved or which is linked to the conflict.

The fight should seek to obtain the support and collusion of the general public, explain the demands and avoid disturbing other workers and the public where possible.

Local demonstration: It publicises the conflict, popularizes the fight, maintains pressure, helps to assess the balance of power.

National or international demonstration: follows the same rules as local but on a large scale.

Rumours: spread rumours, information of all types to weaken the enemy.

Discredit: make public criticisms of the quality of the products or facilities of the business.

Sabotage: (See "Sabotage" by Emile Pouget) This ancient method of fighting is quick and direct. It is still practised but not publicised. It should be handled by people aware of the risks. Catastrophic destruction can even result in the closure of the company. Perhaps a scale of actions may be made to avoid major problems. Sabotage is very effective, low cost for the strikers whilst very damaging to the employer. Always remember that the action must be harmful to the employers but not to users themselves, eg. utilities, transport, electricity, healthcare, food etc...

Re-appropriation: Recovery and control by workers of goods produced by the company - that is to say produced by the workers themselves.

(Unauthorised) Sale of stock: Selling the company's stock to build a war chest and compensate workers.

Autonomous production: The strikers use the company's machines to produce good which can be sold directly to the people at lower cost. This will satisfy everyone and bring funds to the strikers.

Unauthorised work: using their own tools strikers repair, manufacture or provide services to individuals for a fee. The proceeds are put into the strike fund. (Example: hairdressers in Rennes, cut people's hair in a public square. In Australia the tram drivers ran the trams freely for the population.)

Boycott: On the request of workers struggling in a company people do not buy the products or services provided by that company.

Civil disobedience: refusal to comply with the laws of the state. Eg. To support

and assist repressed people. Refusal to pay taxes, refusing to show identification etc.

Generalised strike: A strike situation which affects one or several sectors of production (or commerce) in a region, country or several countries.

General strike: A strike which crosses sectors in a region, country or internationally. It is a conscious and concerted action, which differentiates it from the generalised strike. It is the weapon desired by and defended by anarcho-syndicalists. It is an act by the masses, the population, which is anarcho-syndicalist whether they understand it or not. Indeed, at this stage, people want and intend to fight and challenge their adversaries. They do not rely upon governmental elections, or promises for the future, to effect reform. The people struggle, here and now, relying on direct action, intend to resolve their demands. The general strike expresses the conflict of opposed classes clearly. If it is large, the balance of power is favourable and new choices may appear.

The insurrectionary general strike: for various reasons the strikers form barricades, create disorder and riots. Everywhere the people rise up in arms, opening the prospect of the expropriation of the capitalists.

The expropriatory general strike: the strikers, masters of the street, seize the means of production, exchange and communication. Businesses, commerce, governments are under the control of the committees of struggle. This is the prelude to a profound social change which, in our opinion, will lead to libertarian communism.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Full pamphlet by Seattle Solidarity on building a solidarity network:
http://zinelibrary.info/files/seasol-pamphlet-expanded.pdf
(PDF ready to print)
http://libcom.org/library/you-say-you-want-build-solidarity-network
(text)

'Direct Unionism' debate:
http://libcom.org/library/debate-direct-unionism

Resources for workplace organising:
http://libcom.org/organise/workplace-organising

Brisbane Solidarity Network, 'a grassroots initiative which aims to organise - through collective direct action and mutual-aid - to contribute towards the building of a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian solidarity movement' have a great library/resources section on their website: http://solnet.co.nr/

A great collection of IWW Pamphlets and other literature can be found at http://www.workerseducation.org/crutch/pamphlets/pamphletsdate.html